

Cyprus Thompson Creek

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March 24, 1993

IDaho OPERATIONS OFFICE

Mr. Bill Chamberlain
U. S. E. P. A.
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: **Cyprus Thompson Creek** NPDES Permit Application

Dear Mr. Chamberlain:

I understand that Mr. Bert Doughty has had several telephone conversations with you over the past several months regarding our concern with the apparent delay in processing our NPDES permit application submitted in September, 1992. It's also my understanding that the permit application was developed in a manner which follows EPA's aquatic life criteria and low flow guidelines and should be a relatively straight forward process. Because our operation is no longer operating we need to have the ability to discharge excess precipitation runoff, natural springs and embankment drainage that have come in contact with mining and milling wastes at the site. The above sources are continuing to fill our tailings impoundment. The NPDES permit is critical to our beginning such a discharge as soon as possible.

As you know the Thompson Creek Mine suspended operations on December 20, 1992 leaving the tailings impoundment with a finite amount of free water storage capacity. During the suspension of operations the positive water balance in the system has a much greater impact on the system than when the mill is operating; we are concerned that the snow melt runoff, natural springs and embankment drainage within the tailings system will consume all the available storage capacity in the near future. We have experienced substantial snowfall this winter and the snowpack contributing to runoff into the tailings pond is unusually deep. To maintain the stability of the tailings embankment we must retain 13 feet of free board and 250 feet of beach in the impoundment and we are rapidly approaching these stability thresholds. Discharging excess water pursuant to the NPDES discharge permit is the only realistic solution to this water build-up problem.

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As has been offered on several occasions, we are willing to meet with you in an effort to move the processing of this application along. It's imperative to the safe operation of our tailings facility that we begin removing excess water from the free water pond at the earliest possible date; certainly no later than the beginning of May.

If you have any questions or need further clarification on the matter, please feel free to contact Bert Doughty or myself at (208)838-2200. Thank you for your prompt action on this matter.

Sincerely,



G.S. Hurless
Manager

cc:

B. Doughty, CTC
G. Johnson, USFS
W. McFall, EPA
G. Spinner, IDEQ
S. Staats, IDEQ